prices fall below that level. If the market offers higher price than MSP, the farmers are free to sell at that price. In order to improve availability of credit to farmers, the Government in June, 2004 announced measures for doubling of flow of credit to agriculture sector within a period of three years. During 2007-08, the Banks disbursed Rs.2,54,657 crore against the target of Rs.2,25,000 crore.

(c) and (d) Through the extension activities farmers have been educated to adopt modern agricultural practices including growing organic crops and pesticides free-farming methods. The India Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) through its 567 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) conducts number of training programmes for farmers on various aspects including production and use of bio and organic products/inputs.

Retail expansion plan of NAFED

722. SHRI MOHD. ALI KHAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether NAFED plans retail expansion through franchise route;

(b) if so, the details thereof especially in Andhra Pradesh;

(c) the aims and objective of such plans; and

(d) the implementation stage thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) Yes, Madam. NAFED has planned retail expansion through appointment of franchisees to run retail outlets in the name of NAFED Bazaar for sale of consumer products. NAFED has laid down guidelines for appointment of franchisees. Any party from any State including Andhra Prdesh can apply in accordance with the guidelines. It is proposed to start appointment of franchisees in Delhi and move to other places depending upon its success.

(c) The aims and objective of this plan is to make available quality products of daily need at reasonable price to the consumers.

(d) The implementation of NAFED's plan of retail expansion is at preliminary stage. Offers from interested parties have been invited which will be evaluated as per prescribed guidelines.

Rising Agricultural Input Cost

723. SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the rise in Agricultural input cost and its effect on the farmers in our country;

(b) whether the interest of farmers in Agriculture sector is declining as a result thereof;

(c) if so, the steps being taken to check the rise in Agricultural input cost;